Rethinking the Syllabus and Assessment

Ann Clements
Center for Pedagogy in Arts and Design
Erica Fleming
Teaching and Learning with Technology
Mary Ann Tobin
Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence
Anna Divinsky, Courtney Redding, & Christine Shanks
School of Visual Arts
Technical Elements

Ann Clements, Ph.D.
Professor of Music Education
Director of C-PAD
What is a syllabus?

A syllabus is both a document about the course content, goals, and elements and a guide for students describing the kinds of teaching and learning they can expect in your course.

- Some view is as a contract.
- Clarity is key.
Elements

01 Basic Information
02 Course Description
03 Grading & Examinations
04 Academic Integrity
05 Important Statements
06 COVID-19 Specifics
Basic Information

01
Basic Information

Contact Information
• Office address
• Office hours
• Email address
• Phone number
• TA contact info
• Virtual office hours

Materials
• Books, articles, documents, media
• Where they can find them?
• Required verse optional?
• How clear is it to map these into individual course topics or class assignments?
• Instruments? Safety equipment? Other supplies?

Additional Considerations
• Course copyright statement
• Student conduct or disposition statement
• Military personnel statement
• "Subject to change" statement
02 Course Description
Course Description

Prerequisites
• Prior courses
• Knowledge/skills

Overview of Course
• What is the course about: its purpose, rationale?
• What are the general topics or foci?
• How does it fit with other courses in the department or degree?
• Who is the course for?
• Why would students want to take this course and learn this material?

Learning Objectives

Modes of Instruction
• Lectures
• Discussion
• Group work
• Activities
• Lab work
• Performance
Grading & Examinations
What should students be able to do to demonstrate that they have met key learning objectives?

• How do assignments count toward grading?
• How will they be evaluated?
• Is there an expectation for participation?
• How will overall course grades be calculated?

Grading and Examinations

Assesments
Final Exam Policy (44-20)

Final examinations (policy 44-20) fulfill two important academic objectives: student integration of instructional material and end-of-semester evaluation of student achievement. Other than the final examination how will students accomplish course objectives (e.g., term paper, final project report, take-home examination, performance, etc.)?

Course instructors determine which of these methods is best.

Course instructors are expected to:

• Offer a full schedule of instruction.

• **Schedule no comprehensive examinations during the last week of classes.** Quizzes and narrowly limited tests worth no more than 10% or less of the course grade may be given.

• **Schedule final examinations worth more than 10% of the course grade during the established final examination period.**

• **Set a due date during the final examination period for alternative means of evaluation (term papers, final projects, etc.) worth more than 10% of the course grade.** Alternative means of evaluation worth 10% or less of the course grade may be due prior to the last day of the course.
Academic Integrity
Academic Integrity
(sampling statement provided)

“Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University’s Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.”
Disability Services Statement
(sample statement provided)

“Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University’s educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus (http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator). For further information, please visit Student Disability Resources website (http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: See documentation guidelines (http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.”
"Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients’ cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation."

Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS) (http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/): 814-863-0395

Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses (https://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/)

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400

Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741
Educational Equity and Report Bias
(sample statements provided)

Example 1
Consistent with University Policy AD29, students who believe they have experienced or observed a hate crime, an act of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment that occurs at Penn State are urged to report these incidents as outlined on the University’s Report Bias webpage (http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/)

Example 2
Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage (http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/).

Example 3
Penn State University has adopted a “Protocol for Responding to Bias Motivated Incidents” (http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/reports/protocol-for-responding-to-bias-motivated-incidents)” that is grounded in the policy that the “University is committed to creating an educational environment which is free from intolerance directed toward individuals or groups and strives to create and maintain an environment that fosters respect for others.” That policy is embedded within an institution traditionally committed to academic freedom (https://guru.psu.edu/policies/OHR/hr64.html) Bias motivated incidents include conduct that is defined in University Policy AD 91: Discrimination and Harassment, and Related Inappropriate Conduct (https://guru.psu.edu/policies/ad91.html).

Students, faculty, or staff who experience or witness a possible bias motivated incident are urged to report the incident immediately by doing one of the following:

* Submit a report via the Report Bias webpage (http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/)
* Contact one of the following offices:
  - University Police Services, University Park: 814-863-1111
  - Multicultural Resource Center, Diversity Advocate for Students: 814-865-1773
  - Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity: 814-865-5906
  - Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs: 814-865-0909
  - Affirmative Action Office: 814-863-0471
* Dialing 911 in cases where physical injury has occurred or is imminent
COVID-19 Specifics

06
Mask Wearing
(sample statement provided @ https://senate.psu.edu/)

1. Clearly set the expectation, aligned with University policy, that all students, faculty and staff.

2. Emphasize public health, safety, and cooperation.

3. Address the issue of correct compliance.

4. Address the issue of exceptions.

5. Describe the consequences for refusing to wear a mask in the classroom.

6. Information addressing what constitutes appropriate masks as defined by Penn State.
Attendance (COVID-19)
(sample statement provided @ https://senate.psu.edu/)

1. Set the expectation of regular attendance and participation.

2. In accordance with current University Academic Policy, instructors should avoid using physical attendance as part of course assessment (although active participation may be used).

3. Emphasize that students should NOT come to class physically when they are feeling ill.

4. If your class is set up for synchronous remote participation, spell that out.

5. Let students who may be participating remotely from other campuses know that the course will follow your campuses closure protocols (e.g., if your campus has a compressed schedule for weather delays).

6. While University contact tracing per se will not include students who have been in a classroom where physical distancing and mask wearing have been maintained, it is still a good idea to keep track of who has been in the classroom on what days.

7. Address University guidelines about quarantine and isolation.
Syllabus Content Checklist

1. Contact information for all course instructors
2. Location of the program (i.e., class meeting times and location)
3. Required course materials
4. Course content and expectations
5. Course Goals and Objectives
6. Grade Breakdown by Assessment Type and Percentage
7. Examination Policy (include evening exam schedule, if applicable)
8. Academic Integrity Statement [link]
9. Information on procedures related to academic adjustments identified by the Office of Disability Services [link]
10. Information on available Counseling and Psychological Services [link]
11. Reporting Educational Equity Concerns through the Report Bias site [link]
12. Suggested language for mask wearing and attendance. [link]

* Required statement within the course syllabus.
BOLD - Samples provided
https://keepteaching.psu.edu/
Learning Goals, Objectives, and Assessment

Erica Fleming
Teaching and Learning with Technology

Mary Ann Tobin
Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence
Objectives

By the end of this portion of the agenda, you should be able to

1. write goals and objectives that help students understand what they will learn and do in the course
2. select and/or adapt formative and summative assessments for synchronous and asynchronous environments
3. create flexible and equitable assessments that engage your students and promote deep learning
Background Knowledge Probe

pollev.com/maryanntobin007
Backward Design

1. Learning Outcomes and Goals
2. Assessments Matched to Outcomes
3. Learning Experiences and Activities
Learning Goals

The higher-order ambitions you have for your students
Learning Objectives

OBJECTIVES

Specific, measurable competencies that you assess to see whether goals have been met
Course Goals and Objectives

1. Students will compare classical and contemporary music by creating a Venn Diagram.
2. Students will understand why classical music compositions are important from a historical context
Is Your Learning Objective SMART?

S - Specific
M - Measurable
A - Attainable
R - Relevant
T - Time Based
Bloom’s Taxonomy

- **Remember**: Recall facts and basic concepts (define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state)
- **Understand**: Explain ideas or concepts (classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate)
- **Apply**: Use information in new situations (execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch)
- **Analyze**: Draw connections among ideas (differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test)
- **Evaluate**: Justify a stand or decision (appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh)
- **Create**: Produce new or original work (design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate)
Bloom's Verbs for Objectives
L. Dee Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning
Revising Objectives

By the end of this course, students should acquire a rich vocabulary of musical terms.

Students will expand on the skills they learned in Introduction to Graphic Design.

By the end of lesson one, students will demonstrate knowledge of contemporary European architecture.
Aligning Assessments to Objectives

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<tr>
<th>Objective(s)</th>
<th>Assessment(s)</th>
<th>Learning Opportunities - (Activities)</th>
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Formative Assessments
HOW students are learning

VS

Summative Assessments
HOW MUCH students are learning
Quick Poll

Do you need more detailed information about formative and summative assessment?
Types of Course/Class Assessment
Types of Course/Class Assessment

Formative
- In formation
- Informal
- Actionable
- Anytime

1. Cats are easy to take care of.
   a. Cats clean themselves
   b. Cats burrow their own

2. Cats catch mice.
   a. Save you $ in pest control costs.
   b. You never have to use mouse traps

3. Cats are loveable.
   a. Cats love to be petted.
   b. Cats purr when you scratch them.

4. In conclusion, cats are good pets because they are easy to take care of, catch mice & are loveable.

Cats are good pets.
Types of Course/Class Assessment

**Formative**
- In formation
- Informal
- Actionable
- Anytime

**Summative**
- Summary
- Formal
- Affects final grade
- Few times
Types of Course/Class Assessment

Direct assessments

**Formative**
- In formation
- Informal
- Actionable
- Anytime

**Summative**
- Summary
- Formal
- Affects final grade
- Milestone
Indirect Assessments

Students’ perceptions
- Midsemester Feedback
- Teaching evaluation
- Exit interview
- Graduate or alumni survey

Others’ perceptions
- Internship progress report
- Employer survey

schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/MidsemesterFeedback
1. Think of an assessment you’ve created or adapted for online or mixed mode use.

2. What type of assessment is it?
Exams: Smaller, more frequent, lower stakes
Participation: Authentic, problem-based
Essays: Various formative, direct and indirect assessments
Projects: Multi-modal
Rubrics: Holistic, single-point
Options: Various formats
## Types Of Rubrics

### Analytic

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<th>Meets Some Criterion</th>
<th>Does not Meet Criterion</th>
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<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>Content accurately reflects thorough understanding of topic and is factually correct</td>
<td>Content accurately reflects a basic understanding of topics and is mostly factually correct</td>
<td>Content does not reflect understanding of topics and is mostly factually incorrect</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Explicitly states the arguments both for and against the issue</td>
<td>Presents only one side of the issue or demonstrates an obvious bias</td>
<td>Fails to demonstrate knowledge of pros and cons of the issue</td>
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<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>Defines and explains relevant concepts</td>
<td>Includes relevant concepts, but does not clearly explain them</td>
<td>Does not include or explain relevant concepts</td>
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<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Contains mostly correct manuscript and citation format and is substantially free of grammatical or spelling errors</td>
<td>Contains several instances of incorrect manuscript or citation format and/or grammatical or spelling errors</td>
<td>Does not meet manuscript and citation format requirements and/or contains multiple grammatical or spelling errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Holistic

**Excellent**
- all items attempted
- all correct

**Adequate**
- many, but not all items attempted
- most correct

**Poor**
- many items not attempted
- many incorrect
## Types Of Rubrics

### Single-point

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<th>Kudos</th>
<th>Criteria for grading</th>
<th>Concerns</th>
<th>Criteria for grading</th>
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Assessment Examples from Courses
### Art 10: Introduction to Visual Studies Assignment Rubric

A rubric allows you to evaluate students on the basic criteria that applies to all assignments across the board.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Pts</th>
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<td>Artwork/journal information</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>6.0 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artwork/journal information</td>
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<td>Boundaries</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Boundaries</td>
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| Total Points | 100.0 |

[Sample Rubric in Canvas]
In-text Feedback in Canvas

- Using tools within Canvas allows you to comment within students' submission by adding comments, highlighting areas, crossing out words, and outlining specific areas.
- This provides another way to provide personal targeted feedback and engage students in a different way.
Rubric and Written Feedback: Personalized, Constructive, Encouraging

- Provide clear assignment directions.
- Explain how students will be assessed.
- Establish continuity between rubric, comments within the submission, and overall personal feedback.
- **Sandwich method:** Positive, constructive, positive - allows students to understand what they are doing well and what they can do to grow and improve. List specific steps on how the students can improve. Encourage students to reach out.
- Reflect on previous assessment and implement into future feedback.

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**Assignment Comments:**

Kevin,

Thank you for sharing your "Introduction to Art Assignment" and welcome to the course! I enjoyed reading your narrative and learning about your interests and hobbies. I looked at your YouTube channel - it was really interesting. I plan to show it to my boys. Have you taken an overnight train? Riding a train at night is an especially unique experience.

I like the way you used each train car to symbolize your interests. The thick and painterly brush strokes and your choice of colors work well together. I do a few suggestions for you:

1. You can always water down the paint a bit and use a smaller paintbrush to do the details. It will give you more control and allow you to create smoother, more controlled lines/marks.
2. When photographing your artwork, aim your camera straight down rather than at an angle. This will make the composition look even and balanced.
3. Consider leaving a bit more room around your image, so that the edge of the painting has some space around it.
4. I would have liked to also learn about your professional goals after completing your Communications major.

Looking forward to your next assignment "Fantasy and You" due 5/31. Reach out if you need feedback for your in-progress artwork.

Best,

Anna

Anna Driewsky, May 25 at 3:50pm
Live Feedback in Remote Courses

Live feedback can be used for active learning and direct communication in your:

- Virtual office hours
- One-on-one student meetings
- Group brainstorming sessions or critiques
Examples of Engaging Live Feedback

- Video conferencing like Zoom can be used as one-on-one "walk-in" office hours for students at a set time weekly.

- Video conferencing can also be used for group discussions and group Q&As.

- A dedicated student phone number (using a VoIP app such as Google Voice) can help you connect with students through phone or text.
Why Live Feedback?

- Connecting Live can often reduce the amount of time spent working with a student asynchronously and streamline communication.
- For creative brainstorming, a live discussion can open many possibilities for students.
- For students falling behind a live meeting through video, phone, or text chat can often be the human interaction they need to get them back on track.
- Sessions can lead to a follow-up opportunity to help a student troubleshoot a technical issue or follow through on a plan to get back on track in the class.
Audio Feedback in Canvas

https://youtu.be/BatCUoKr0Y
Feedback in Voicethread

https://youtu.be/I8Iu3HVG7FM

Read and reply to comments
Using Canvas for Audio Feedback

"I just wanted to reach out to say I did enjoy the semester and always loved reading your comments of feedback or listening to the audio files. It was always switched up which was nice. I appreciate all of your comments! Thank you for a great semester."

Julia Ziegler, Summer 2020
ART 20: Introduction to Online Drawing

“I truly appreciate all of your feedback and I think I will miss that part the most. Feedback is a gift and I hope that you saw some improvement in my work from week to week.”

Stephen Veit, Summer 2020
ART 20: Introduction to Online Drawing
Q & A
Contact Information:

Erica Fleming, TLT
etf10@psu.edu
Find your campus or college ID consultant:
https://tlt.psu.edu/booking/

Mary Ann Tobin, SITE
matobin@psu.edu
Find your SITE consultant:
http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/consults

Ann Clements, C-PAD
acc13@psu.edu
The Center for Pedagogy in Arts and Design
cpad.psu.edu

Anna Divinsky, SoVA
axd289@psu.edu

Christine Shanks
cgs5966@psu.edu

Courtney Redding
cad256@psu.edu
Many thanks to our partners in the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs:

**Kathleen Bieschke**  
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

**Abigail Diehl**  
Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

**Wendy Blumenthal**  
Administrative Support Assistant
Upcoming New Faculty Orientation (NFO) Seminar Series Sessions:

**October**

- Wednesday, October 7, 2020, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
  *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Teaching and Learning at Penn State*

- Wednesday, October 14, 2020, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
  *Research and Graduate Student Mentoring*

- Friday, October 16, 2020, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
  *Resources for Faculty: University Libraries, Information Technology, and Student Affairs*

- Thursday, October 22, 2020, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
  *Academic Freedom and Shared Governance*

**November**

- Wednesday, November 4, 2020, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
  *Tips, Tools, and Techniques of Educational Technology*

**January**

- Wednesday, January 27, 2021, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
  *Innovative Teaching: Faculty Showcase*

Note: The 2020-2021 Promotion and Tenure Workshop will take place on Thursday, September 24th via Zoom from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. Information can be found at: [https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/upcoming-events/](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/upcoming-events/).